1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

husband ill-treated her, while she provided a chorus of simulated wailing. They took her off to the booths prepared for her parents and the guests from her village, and sat there with her for the rest of the morning and all the afternoon, taking their food there, while the rest of the guests finished the *lauda* and slowly dispersed, beating their drums, along the forest paths. At about 5.30 p.m. the bridegroom entered the bridal hut alone, while his younger brother went to the booth where the bride had spent the afternoon, cried 'Come, sister-in-law, it is time that you were bedded,' caught her by the hand and tried to drag her off. She screamed and feigned resistance, but he called four or five other laughing youths to help him, and between them they pulled the girl to the door of the bridal hut, opened it and pushed her in, barring the door on the outside. Then they stole a cock from the bridegroom's coop, and, accompanied by the girls who had come with the bride from her village, plucked the cock and scattered its feathers along a path leading to a forest glade, where they cooked and ate it, and all dispersed.

The *otor* and *ahesahattu* forms of marriage among the Hill Marias have already been mentioned; the same forms exist among the Bison-horn Marias. Actually women are very free to change their attachments or, if unattached, to go to the house of the man of their choice and live with him as his wife even if he is already married. It is convenient for the man to have the services of an extra woman in a society in which so much work is done by women; and it is not considered right for a nubile woman to be unattached. Particularly among the Bison-horn Marias, men with two or three wives are common; only one of these will be a regularly married wife, and the others will be either her younger sisters or parallel-cousins or other women who have come into the husband's keeping of their own choice, or after becoming pregnant as a result of a liaison with him. The expression commonly used by the Bison-horn Marias for a woman going in this way to live with a man is the local and Chhattisgarhi Hindi term *paise-mundi*, and the unions are known as *paithu* or *odiyattur*; there seems to be no difference between these, just as for practical purposes there is little between the *otor* and *ahesahattu* forms of the Hill Marias. Where an unmarried woman is made pregnant, and becomes the man's wife by living at his house, the man has to give his fellow-clansmen an entertainment (*paithu*) or dinner, and pay the usual bride-price. Husbands have similarly to give a dinner when unmarried girls, wives or widows, of their own choice and without their guardians' consent, go to live with him; but in such

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2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond AW32
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But I doubt if the necessity of ancestral worship devolving on the youngest son accounts for the Lingo legend. In Bastar, it is a sister's son or a son-in-law who generally performs the funerary rites. Lingo was—in most versions of the tale—miraculously born and the parents play no part in the sequence of events. The Lingo legends fit into the common folk-tale formula: probably all the elements suggested by Macculloch had their part in its construction; but I believe it is the custom of the Levirate (to which Macculloch does not refer) that gives it its real point.

The legend, especially in its Bastar form, cannot be understood apart from the foundation of the ghotul and the horror of adultery so characteristic of Muria society. Here is a very practical reason for the village dormitory—it insulates the elder brothers' wives from the dangerous, legitimate, seductive younger brothers. The youth of the tribe, so distracting to business with its fun and music, is concentrated away from home. The figure of Lingo stands out as the ideal younger brother, who denies himself even his legitimate claims and is absorbed in the ghotul and the motiari. It is not impossible that the legend was composed by a jealous elder brother, once cuckolded and turned reformer, who desired to abolish the disruptive influence of the *sage-devar* relationship.

There remains the character of Lingo which reminds Bishop Eyre Chatterton 'so strangely' of Jesus Christ. The impropriety of comparing the two figures becomes evident when we remember that Sir Richard Temple had to omit nearly half the poem describing Lingo because it was 'frivolous, improper and objectionable'. I greatly doubt whether either Hislop's or Trench's version represents the original legend as it was told normally to village people. The Pardhan priest in Nagpur was obviously a Hindu convert and would not be likely to repeat passages that would too greatly offend a missionary. I suspect too the hand of the Reverend Baba Pandurang. I doubt also whether Mr Trench's petition-writer would have been likely to have risked any improper elements in the story of Rai Linga. This may sound rather hypercritical, but I have never been able to understand how it was that a cult-hero with a phallic name—Lingo means the phallus—should have become the embodiment of purity. Nor could I understand why the supposed embodiment of the Gond virtues should have been a celibate. The Gond despise celibacy; they believe that a man who dies unmarried turns into an especially unpleasant ghost after his death; the sadhus and other celibates in their folk-tales are without exception presented as the greatest rascals.

The Bastar version of the legend suggests a solution of this problem. Lingo is a phallic deity, as the origin of his name given in the legend on page 241 clearly shows. He does not ascend into heaven, but marries seven wives and has children who people the Bastar shrines with gods. He is the founder of the ghotul, where he has his motiari. This is the true Gond picture of the character of Lingo. Hislop's and Trench's versions are undoubtedly nobler to Western and Brahmin eyes, but they are unreal in a Gond setting.

VI. The Lingo Legend in Bastar

Not all the Muria know the legend of Lingo, though all worship him and regard him as the founder of the ghotul. His cult is more or less coterminous with the Pus Kolang, which is danced in his honour. Different versions of the legend have, however, been recorded in the Antagarh, Benur, Amabera and Chat Jhorian Parganas of the Narayanpur Tahsil, and at Alor and Kanhargaon in the Kondagaon Tahsil. In north and east Kondagaon, though

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X 883 626 When they reach his house they call for his wife and shut them up together in a room just as they did once before at their marriage. To make it more realistic, they steal a cock and scatter its feathers along the road. This suggests that the couple were not properly married before. Very few people are sufficiently hardened to persist in their visits after this.

X 883 837 But when a man who is popular among the younger people and trusted by them is invited to the ghotul, or is allowed to retain his appointment, things are very different. Such a man may even be allowed to sleep with a motiari occasionally, or one of his friends will slip out at night and give him place. It is remarkable that in many cases married men continue to act for years as leaders of the ghotul. Such a man is the very popular Lakmu, who is still at the age of forty the Diwan of Masora. His own son, Phirtu, is the Chowkidar of the same ghotul. The Diwan of Kabonga was married five years ago and attends the ghotul when visitors come or a judgement has to be given. 'Whenever I sleep there', he said, 'the boys give me a motiari to keep me company.' He also goes out with the boys on their dancing expeditions. At Hathipakna, Maru, the Sirdar of the ghotul, married again after the death of his first wife. He is still continuing his duties after his marriage. Ghasi, the Diwan of this ghotul, has been married for ten years; Gaglu, the Mukhwan, has been married for eight; they continue to hold office, though they only rarely sleep in the dormitory.

Indeed a popular boy, especially a Kotwar, sometimes has great difficulty in leaving the ghotul. At Margaon the Kotwar said, 'They refused to let me go, and my wife used to quarrel with me every night. At last I gave a bottle of liquor to the chelik and motiari, and begged them to free me from my duties. They did so and since then there have been no more quarrels in my home.' In 1941 at Kabonga there were no fewer than three Kotwars, none of whom was allowed to leave. At last the eldest found it very difficult to continue coming to the ghotul and told the chelik so at the Mahua Dandar. He was fined four annas and then excused.

X 883 591 768 589 There are other reasons besides popularity for this. Sometimes big boys are married to very little girls and the boys naturally remain in the ghotul until their wives are mature. Sometimes widowers return to their ghotul and decide not to marry again. The leader of the Markabera ghotul, Daru, is a widower. After his wife's death he returned to the ghotul and resumed his duties. In Padbera a widower with his little son both come regularly. Then again there are men who never marry. It is not unusual to see men of thirty or forty years still unmarried, still wearing all the ornaments of the chelik and continuing as ordinary members of the ghotul. Kodiya, for example, the Diwan of Malakot, now about 45 years old, is still unmarried. Here the working head of the dormitory is the Sirdar, a charming youth, who uses his Diwan as a sort of appellate court in cases of difficulty and dispute.

X 883 The association of older men with the ghotul is far from harmful. They are able to supervise the life of the children, to prevent bullying and unkindness, to look after their health, to hush up scandals and to settle serious disputes.

X 883 578 But it is never approved by their wives. The attitude of the wife of the Malik of Chikdongri is typical. 'You are always going to the ghotul', she said. 'well, why not get some nice boy to sleep with me. You provide amusement for yourself, why not for me?' The Baidar of Kameri said, 'After I was married, I couldn't stop going to the ghotul. The elders complained, and my father got me a second wife thinking that would keep me at home. At last the village panchayat fined me three rupees, and I stopped going.'

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When you saw me and knew that your heart was not captured, why did you ruin me? What am I to do now? Tell me. Where am I to go?'

Inside the ghotul sexual anaesthesia is known, but it is uncommon and is regarded as a sort of deviation. I have met a few Muria who have never been to the ghotul or who have never shared its sexual activities. Dhansingh Pandu of Palki is a man of some forty years and still unmarried. He has never been to a ghotul. His father used to say to him, 'These boys talk in front of their sisters as if they were their lovers. You don't know what gods there are in the ghotul; many gods live there; you might unwittingly offend one of them and be destroyed. No one knows what people may have in their hearts when all sleep together.' But it was not only his father's exaggerated fears of the supernatural that stopped Dhansingh from attending the ghotul; he himself had no desire to go. But now he regrets it. 'I am a very lonely man', he told me. 'I might now be happily married. But at that time I was very poor and I had no passion.' The real reason for his abstinence seems to have been a dread that he would be forced into sexual intercourse for which he had neither power nor inclination.

Another Muria who has never been a chelik is Hagru of Masora. In his youth he lived in the Hindu potters' quarter of Kondagaon town where there was, of course, no ghotul. 'I used to feel very lonely when I heard how happy the other boys were, but what could I do?'

Early marriage sometimes brings ghotul life to a premature close. In Malakot, I found the people arranging their children's marriages as early as possible 'to prevent copulation in the ghotul'. Old Sukali of Masora was married so young that 'she never even learnt to sing a Relo'. But child-marriage is not common and young married girls are generally allowed to attend the ghotul till puberty or until they are sent to live with their husbands.

Although the Muria insist on abstinence from sexual congress before the ceremonial hunts and require their priests to remain celibate on various occasions, the rule does not seem to be due to any special regard for celibacy as such or belief in its power; it is rather connected with the dread of the menstruous woman. On the eve of a festival all the males of a village must sleep in the ghotul—which for that night is cleared of motiari—to ensure that none of their wives or other relatives will infect them with the defilement of a catamenial period that might begin during the night. So too the very strict rules governing a young Gaita's relations with women in the Chota Dongar Pargana appear to be based mainly on a desire to isolate him from the dreaded menstrual contact.

Celibacy is not admired, and it is dangerous to be unmarried, for a man or woman who dies in this condition lives for ever restless and frustrated, and a nuisance to the friends he has left behind on earth. It should be noted that it is marriage and not sexual experience that is important. The Hindu sadhu is rarely respected, though he may be feared for his supposed supernatural powers. The state of *sanyās* is everywhere associated in the aboriginals' mind with idleness and beggary rather than with chastity. In Alor the chelik spoke very scornfully of celibacy: 'It is a way of life for loafers.' And of boys and girls who stand aside from the main life of the ghotul, they say 'they will get children directly they begin'. 'There may be one in a thousand girls who tries to keep her water, but she will get a child in her *haldi-dhoti*', while her clothes are still stained with the marriage turmeric. It is dangerous to store up power, for when it is released it may prove too potent.

In order to enforce this attitude, the chelik tell a number of stories illustrating the danger of breaking the ghotul tradition. One such tale, from

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Atargaon, is about the seven motiari who knew nothing about sex. One day they went to gather leaves with their grandmother. The old lady climbed a tree and the girls looked up and saw her vagina. When she told them what it was for, they were so frightened that they left the ghotul and went to live far away in the jungle. Whenever they saw a man they beat him and drove him away. The story proceeds through various adventures to the inevitable conclusion. Each of the girls is seduced by a sadhu and becomes pregnant.

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Another story, given me by Sonu, a Muria of Jamkot, is of interest as emphasizing the ghotul doctrine of equality, that everyone in the ghotul fellowship must be loved and happy: if not, disaster may befall.

There were seven score chelik and seven score motiari. All slept together in the ghotul. One of them was the son of a grazier of goats, and none of the girls would sleep with him. When he came to the ghotul, they would abuse him. 'Get out, you grazier's son, you block of wood.' The boy's name was Lakari; that was why they called him a block of wood. But Lakari was a clever boy and he made a love-charm.

One day the boys and girls decided to go to Kodawata to earn their living. When he heard of this, Lakari decided to have all the girls for himself. He put the boys to sleep by his charms. When the girls were ready for their journey, he went ahead beating his drum. They thought that all the boys had started and set out after them.

Now Lakari was very poor; his bed was the earth, his blanket was the air, his pillow was his own elbow. He was so poor that no girl would let him sleep with her. He went along with an axe over his shoulder, his *dhol* drum slung from his arm and a drumstick in one hand. He led the girls away into the jungle, on and on for a whole month. When he beat the drum they ran after him, but he always kept at a distance so that they wouldn't know who it was.

The jungle stretched for twelve *kos* on every side, there was not even the name of a village. The jungle was called Madhuban, the sweet forest; the trees were so tall that it seemed the moon had stuck to them. When Lakari had led the girls into the very heart of this jungle, he took off his clothes and sat shivering with cold. When the girls saw that the chelik were not there and it was only Lakari who had brought them all that way, they were angry and disappointed.

On a hill-top between two rivers Lakari built a ghotul for himself. On the far side of the river he made another house for the girls. They refused to visit him or even look at him, they were so angry. By the time the rains began they found they had eaten all their provisions for the year. Lakari himself had nothing; he lived on honey.

Now at last one of the girls came to him and said, 'How are we to live here without a village or bazaar? Even you can give us nothing to eat'. Lakari replied, 'I will see to everything; come with me to the bazaar and we will get what we want'. The girls went fishing in the river, and this girl brought fish in a basket and he himself took honey and they went together to the bazaar at Ladri. They sold their things and bought what they wanted. On the way back, Lakari went as slowly as he could so that they would have to spend the night in the jungle and the girl would have to sleep with him. When darkness fell he made her a bed in the sand of a river; there was one bed for him and one for her with a fire between. He had brought food and ornaments to please her.